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December 3, 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Alsop-Bartlett Story

Both network commentators on the 5 o'clock news today featured the claim that the White House had not denied the charges in the Saturday Evening Post article.

The President and Salinger refused to deny today the allegations and charges contained in the Saturday Evening Post article

-- Sandy Vancur

It is notable that the White House does not deny the accuracy of the charges

-- Ray Scherer

This is the point which is currently being played up around town and which will presumably dominate the press stories tomorrow. Everyone is drawing the comparison with the downfall of Chester Bowles, which, as you will recall, was also preceded by a Bartlett article. For whatever reason, the press seems determined (as was evidenced in Pierre's briefing) to take the White House statement as a deliberately pallid defense of Stevenson and to regard the whole affair as a prelude to Stevenson's dismissal. All this naturally impairs Stevenson's position and authority in the UN.

I think that something more should be done to deal with the situation. Here are two possibilities:

1. You might put out a statement along the following lines: "If any misunderstanding remains about Governor Stevenson's role

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in the Cuban deliberations, let me say once and for all that he did not propose trading the European bases for the Soviet bases in Cuba, that he did not dissent from the Executive Committee consensus, that he did not oppose the quarantine, that he did not prefer political negotiation to the alternative of military action and that he has today, as he has always had, my full confidence and respect as a member of the National Security Council and as United States Ambassador to the United Nations."

2. I (or someone) might leak to the New York Times the following quotations from the Stevenson memoranda:

On the subject of the Turkish and Italian bases: "Turkey and Italy should not be included in the initial offer. Their inclusion would divert attention from the Cuban threat to the general problem of foreign bases. ... The effect in Turkey, particularly if there is not careful advance preparation, might be very serious."

On the subject of political negotiation as against military action: any political offer must take place "within the scope of vigorous U.S. military action to defend our security"; any offer "in the absence of U.S. military response to the Soviet moves would be weak."

The objection to this counter-leakage is that it would provoke a demand for the full text of the memoranda; but no doubt this could be dealt with.

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

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